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ABSTRACT

In the Fall of 1991, an advisory group of teachers was formed for the purpose of developing a Teachers Teaching Teacher Institute (TTTI) that would be designed, implemented, and evaluated by teachers for teachers. The advisory group was comprised of experienced, practicing classroom teachers from a cross section of school districts and grade levels. The panel produced a list of workshop topics, identified experienced classroom teachers as directors, and designed a program format. The TTTI has three interrelated components: (1) summer workshops offered for graduate credit; (2) follow-up sessions once per quarter throughout the school year; and (3) a training component for workshop directors. The existence of the TTTI has depended on ongoing evaluations: formal, informal, formative, and evaluative sources have been used to assess it. Participants assess instructional quality, content, and program design; directors evaluate instructional quality, content, and program design; and the advisory group evaluates the overall success of the program and generates ideas to improve it. (Contains 12 references.) (LL)

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A COLLABORATIVE RESTRUCTURING TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM: A TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS INSTITUTE

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A COLLABORATIVE RESTRUCTURING TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM: A TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS INSTITUTE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this presentation is to describe a model for developing a program designed by and for teachers in collaboration with a middle-to-small sized teacher education program. Specifically, this presentation will describe a Teachers Teaching Teachers Institute (TTTI) which has three components: over-the-summer workshops, during-the-school-year follow-up sessions, and a training model for the directors (practicing teachers) of the workshops. Both the topics and the directors were identified by a panel of teachers representing a cross-section of districts (urban, rural, suburban, private) and grade levels (elementary, middle, high, and special). The training model was designed and implemented by an experienced adult educator and addressed topics such as: needs of adult learners, expectations of adult learners, evaluation, and instructional strategies.

Reforming schooling cannot be successful without changing the way we educate teachers (America 2000, 1991; Holmes, 1990; Carnegie, 1986; Holmes,1986). This change involves many layers, each of which is complex, dynamic and interdependent on every other. First, teacher education no longer ends when one enters the profession but continues throughout the professional, in-service life of the teacher. Second, what teachers need to know, the insights they need to have, and the dispositions they must possess are increasing and becoming more complicated. Third, in order for in-service teacher education to be effective it must respond to the needs of the teacher (Darling-Hammond, 1992). Fourth, the restructuring of schools, leadership for the restructuring, and in-service education will need to be fluidly connected and best if guided by teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1992; Sykes, 1990). Fifth, for an innovation to succeed in education, those who implement the program must share in its vision (Fullan, 1982, found in Winitzky, Stoddart, and O'Keefe, 1992). The purpose of the TTTI is to merge these needs into an in-service venture which is designed-implemented-evaluated by and for teachers in order to advance schooling.

Leggett and Paige (1987) list the following four reasons why in-service programs for staff development fail:

1) one shot and not selected by teachers;
2) failure to follow-up;

3) teachers may have other priorities; and,

4) failure to provide support at the school level for new skills.

According to Bishop (1987), three prerequisites for successful reform in practice must include:

1) proven to be clear improvements from existing practice;

2) structured to reduce anxiety and fear of change; and,

3) appropriate modelling and support both during and after.

Using these warnings from Leggett and Paige (1987), the prerequisites from Bishop (1987), plus the notion from Bishop that design is the most critical feature needed for successful staff development, the concept of a TTTI was formed.

Throughout this century, schools and universities have attempted reform through collaboration. From the Committee of Ten of the late 1800's to the Professional Development Schools of the late 1900's (Holmes, 1990), there have been repeated collaborative reform efforts. Nonetheless, many of the reforms have failed and/or were short-lived. "One obvious hypothesis [for the recurring failure] is the lack of evaluation and systematic research and development" (Winitzky et al., 1992, p. 4); therefore, the literature that has accumulated to guide such reform attempts is quite limited (Winitzky et al., 1992). The TTTI contributes to this limited knowledge base as a model of collaborative reform that was systematically developed, implemented, and evaluated. Secondly, the TTTI ties reforms in teacher education to reforms in schools. Many of the previous reform efforts have been too particularistic and have not made changes that involve and affect the whole of the education enterprise. Winitzky et al. (1992) conclude that this system change has been missing in past reform efforts.

Further support for the TTTI comes from America 2000, the "national strategy" developed by the National Governors' Association and adopted by President Bush, which honors local control and relies on local initiative for implementation. The TTTI creates a community of learners-- a community of those learners who are best able to make change--the classroom teachers.

CONTEXT

The TTTI is a part of the Master of Arts in Education program at a small (2600 students) comprehensive liberal arts institution located in a suburb of the state capital in the Great Lakes area. Since its founding in 1847, the college has balanced the liberal arts with the practicality of career training. Preparing teachers has always been a significant component of the college's mission and pride. In 1988-89, the college began graduate programs in education. The focus of the Master of Arts in Education (MAE) program was designed to help certified teachers improve their knowledge and skills. The TTTI complements both the mission of the college and the goal of the MAE program.

DEVELOPMENT

Summer workshops began in 1989 as mini-courses directed to specific curricular and instructional ideas. Each of the eight workshops was offered for graduate credit and the topics were identified by an advisory group of teachers. The directors of the workshops were experts who were renowned in the metropolitan community or were members of the college faculty. There was one exception: one of the workshops was taught by two experienced teachers. The workshop taught by the two experienced teachers was the best attended and the most highly acclaimed by the participants.

In the summer of 1990, the idea of teachers leading these mini-courses was expanded into more offerings (three of the ten offered) and during the summer of 1991, every workshop (thirteen of thirteen) was directed by an experienced and/or practicing classroom teacher. To determine the offerings and the directors for the 1991 schedule, a needs assessment was distributed to superintendents, curriculum directors, and principals in the metropolitan area. So in the Summer of 1991, two weeks of mini-courses were directed by a variety of teachers from different districts, grade levels, and areas of specialization.

From the feedback, it was apparent the idea of teachers teaching teachers was golden. The teacher directors benefitted and the teacher participants benefitted.

In the fall of 1991, an advisory group of teachers was formed for the purpose of developing an institute for teachers teaching teachers--an institute that would be organic in nature and designed-implemented-evaluated by teachers for teachers. The advisory group consisted of teachers from a cross section of school districts (urban, rural, suburban, private) and grade levels (elementary, middle, secondary, special). The advisory group produced a list of workshop topics, identified directors,

and designed the two-part organic format. The institute idea was born and will be implemented beginning Summer, 1992 (a brochure is enclosed).

DESIGN

The TTTI has three interrelated components: the summer workshops scheduled during the last two weeks of June, follow-up sessions once per quarter throughout the school year, and a training component for the workshop directors.

ASSESSEMENT

The actual existence of the TTTI as an organic program has depended on ongoing evaluations. Multiple sources, both formal and informal, both formative and evaluative, have been and will continue to be used to assess the TTTI. The participants will assess the instructional quality, the content, and the program design. The directors will also evaluate the instructional quality, the content, and the program design. The Advisory Group (the original sources of the program) will re-convene to evaluate the overall success of the program and to generate ideas to improve the TTTI.

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